What is Orthodox Christianity?

The Orthodox Christian Church, also called the “Eastern Orthodox,” “Greek Orthodox” Church, or simply “the Orthodox Church,” is the oldest Christian Church in the world, founded by Jesus Christ and with its beginnings chronicled in the New Testament. All other Christian churches and groups can be traced historically back to it.

With roughly 250 million members worldwide, Orthodoxy is second in size only to the Roman Catholic Church. However, in spite of its size, relatively few Americans are aware that it exists.

The Orthodox Church has deep and lasting roots in Christian antiquity and is steeped in rich Biblical tradition. It has been the context of Christian living for millions of Christians for almost twenty centuries.

Yet one cannot understand the Orthodox Church merely by reading about it. Just as reading a biography about someone is no substitute for knowing the biography’s subject personally, Orthodox Christianity must be experienced firsthand to be understood. We welcome and invite you to come worship with us, to “come, taste and see” (Psalm 34:8).

Even though Orthodox Christianity must be experienced directly to realize the fullness of its life, there are questions which are commonly asked when first visiting an Orthodox Church that can have some light shed upon them with a few brief words.

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity

Orthodox Christianity is not familiar to most Americans, even though the community of the Orthodox has existed for some 2,000 years even though there have been Orthodox Christians in America since its founding as a nation.

So, what is Orthodox Christianity? It is the life in faith of the Orthodox Church, inseparable from that concrete, historic community and constituting its whole way of life. The Orthodox Christian faith is that faith “handed once to the saints” (Jude 3), passed on to the apostles by Jesus Christ, and then handed down from one generation to the next within the Church, without adding anything or taking anything away.

The purpose of Orthodox Christianity is the salvation of every human person, uniting us to Christ in the Church, transforming us in holiness, and giving us eternal life. This is the Gospel, the good news, that Jesus is the Messiah, that He rose from the dead, and that we can be saved as a result.

Historically, the Orthodox Church is the oldest of all Christian churches. Ultimately, all Christian communities can trace their own history back to the Orthodox Church. In the pages of the New Testament we read the beginnings of the Orthodox Church, and even today Orthodox Christianity continues to live on in most of the places mentioned in the New Testament where the Apostles first preached the Gospel. This is the Church that wrote, compiled and canonized the Holy Scriptures, that formulated the traditional doctrines of Christianity, and that has believed and lived the same faith for 2,000 years.

Today, Orthodox Christianity's largest communities exist primarily in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, though there are also sizable communities in North America, Western Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia, primarily through immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries, but also through a growing number of converts to the faith. It is the second largest Christian communion in the world, smaller only than the Roman Catholic Church. The Orthodox Church is sometimes referred to as "Greek Orthodox" or "Eastern Orthodox," but the best term is simply Orthodox Christian. So what do Orthodox Christians believe? And how do they live?

Read the rest of the articles in this series for a brief introduction to the beliefs and practices of the Orthodox Church.

God

Who is God?

Orthodox Christians worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Holy Trinity, the one God (Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14; I Peter 1:1-2; Rom. 14:17-18, 15:16, etc.). Following the Holy Scriptures as interpreted by the Holy Fathers of our faith, the Church believes that the Trinity is three divine persons of one essence. There never was a time when any of the persons of the Trinity did not exist. God is beyond and before time and yet acts within time, moving and speaking within history.

God is not an impersonal essence or merely a "higher power," but rather the divine

Persons of the Trinity relate to mankind personally. Neither is the word *God* merely a name for three gods—we're not polytheists. Rather, the Orthodox faith is monotheist and yet Trinitarian. The God of the Orthodox Christian Church is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the I AM who revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2-14).

The Church primarily draws near to God and communes with Him in divine mystery, approaching God apophatically, which means that we don't make precise, exhaustive definitions of Who God is. We're content to encounter God personally, realizing the inadequacy of the human mind to comprehend Him (John 1:18; I John 4:12; Is. 55:9) and following the revelation about Himself that He has made. We know Who He is because He has told us through Jesus Christ.

The primary statement of what the Church believes about God is found in the , usually just called the Nicene Creed, which was formulated in AD 325 and 381 at the First and Second Ecumenical Councils.

So if God's character is revealed by Jesus Christ, then Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. He is the I AM revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:2-14). He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). He is the God before the ages who came to Earth as a little child. He and the Father are one (John 10:30), because He is of one essence with the Father. During His suffering and death on the cross, one of the Trinity suffered in the flesh.

As described in the Gospels, Jesus Christ was born of a woman—the Virgin Mary—as a real human child. He grew into a full-grown man. He preached, healed, taught His disciples, died in physical reality on the cross, and then rose bodily from the dead on the third day. He then ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9) and sat down at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19). Of all mankind, He alone is without sin.

Jesus is the *Theanthropos*, the God-man. He is not half God and half man, nor is He a hybrid of the two. Rather, He is fully God and fully man, perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity. He has two natures, joined together in the Incarnation without mixture, division, or confusion. This is the doctrine of the Incarnation, that God became a man while still remaining God. He is the Messiah, the Christ—the Anointed One of God, foretold by the prophets of the Old

Testament.

His work on Earth was for the purpose of saving mankind, for the life of the world. Everything He did was for our salvation, whether it was being baptized, teaching in parables, healing the sick, or His glorious death and resurrection. Because of who He is and of what He did for us, we have the opportunity to become by grace what He is by nature, to the fullness of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13). We can put on the divine, becoming partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4).

That's Who Jesus is and what He came here to do. But who are we? What is mankind? And what's wrong with the human race?

Mankind

Orthodox Christian doctrine about human nature—which we call *anthropology*—teaches that man was created by God to worship Him in communion with Him, made according to His image to attain to His likeness (Gen. 1:26). Each human being is of infinite value, because we bear the indelible stamp of our Creator. All human beings are composed of both a soul and body, which are permanently part of human nature. Man was created sinless, but not perfected, and so although Adam, the first man, was pure when he was created, he was created for dynamic progress, capable of growing more and more like God.

At the fall of mankind, when Adam and Eve sinned for the first time, they not only sinned in violation of God's commandments, but their whole way of being changed. Their nature was not changed in itself, but the image of God in them became obscured by sin. And sin is a separation from God in our very being. So even though we're fallen, we're not totally depraved, but we suffer from the disease of sin which makes holiness a lot more difficult.

All of mankind suffers from the effects of sin (death, sickness, and all evil), even aside from which sins each of us has committed. In Orthodox anthropology, guilt is not our main problem. The problem is that we are sick. So when we talk about original sin, it is understood not as a transmitted guilt for Adam's sin, but rather as an inherited disease which can be cured in salvation, the dynamic path of growth into God's likeness.

So for the Orthodox, what does it mean to be saved?

Salvation

In the Orthodox Church, salvation is primarily understood as *theosis*. *Theosis* is the infinite process of becoming more and more like God. *Theosis* can be translated as deification or *divinization*, and its meaning is that the Christian can become more and more soaked with the divine life, becoming by grace what Christ is by nature. As St. Athanasius the Great (4th century) put, “God became man so that man might become divine.” By participation in the Incarnation, we can become like Christ. Becoming like Christ is much bigger than just where we go when we die.

For the Orthodox, salvation is a process that encompasses not only the whole earthly life of the Christian, but also the eternal life of the age to come. It is often described in terms of three stages—purification (*katharsis*), illumination (*theoria*) and divinization (*theosis*). Salvation is therefore not only becoming sinless (purification), but it is also progress in being filled with the divine light (illumination). And it is becoming so filled with God in union with Him that we shine with the likeness of God. In some cases that means even literally becoming a bearer of the Uncreated Light, which is a physically visible light from God that is His presence, such as at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-6; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:28-36) or when Moses spoke with God on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 34:29-35). Though this terminology of three stages is sometimes used, there is overlap between them, and the whole process itself is also called *theosis*.

It is only in and through Christ that we can be saved (John 14:6). Salvation cannot be earned. It’s a free gift from God. But being saved requires our cooperation with God, because God will not violate our free will. A life of repentance is needed—that’s turning away from our sin and toward God. Along with repentance, participation in the sacraments, like baptism and holy communion, is how we cooperate with God. God’s grace not only forgives sins through Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross but also makes us more like Christ. This cooperation is called synergy (*synergeia*), making us co-workers with God (I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 6:1).

In *theosis*, we become filled with the divine life. We take on God’s attributes, but we do not become merged with the Holy Trinity. We become partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). There is union but without fusion. We say that we can become a “god” by grace, not in a polytheistic sense (there is only one God), but rather we become adopted sons and daughters of the Most High (Ps. 82:6; John 10:34), like our Father but not the same as Him. A classic image of *theosis* from Church history is a sword held in a flame—the sword gradually takes on the

properties of the flame (light and heat), but it remains a sword. Our goal is for all things to be gathered together in Christ (Eph. 1:10, 2:6).

The Church also speaks of salvation as adoption, as atonement, as healing, as substitution by Christ, as sacrifice, as having a debt paid, as having crimes pardoned, etc., but *theosis* is the primary model through which salvation is understood. We've talked a lot about the Church. So what is the Church?

The Church

The Church is the Body of Christ, a divine and human communion of Jesus Christ with His people. The only head of the Church is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22, 5:23; Col. 1:18). describes the Church as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. This means that the Church is one—undivided and not many; it's holy—sanctified and set apart for the work of God; it's catholic—whole and characterized by fullness and universality; and it's apostolic, going out into all the world to preach the Gospel and baptize the nations, as well as being rooted and founded in the work of the Apostles. And the word *Church* itself in its Greek form of *ekklesia* means "those who are called out." The Church is called out from the world by God.

The Church is the Bride of Christ (John 3:29), united to the Son of God in faith and love. And He gave himself up on the cross for the Church (Eph. 5:23). The intimacy of a husband and wife is an earthly image of the intimacy that Christ has with His Church, and the union of an earthly marriage is a shadow of the union of the marriage of Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, with the Church.

The community of the Church is the location of salvation for mankind; it is the Ark in which we can be saved from the flood of corruption and sin. In it, Christians sacramentally work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12), worshiping the Holy Trinity in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15) and so we rely on the Church in our struggle to apprehend the one truth for ourselves. The Church is eternal, and the gates of Hell will never prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

The Church includes the prophets and saints of both the Old and New Covenants, the angels and the concrete, historical community of believers in this earthly life. Those who have gone on before us are sometimes called the *Church Triumphant*, while those still in this life are called the *Church Militant* (Heb. 12:1).

The final boundaries of the Church are known only to God himself, but outside the

historical Church—which is the Orthodox Church—the connection of any particular person to the Church (Christian or not) is unknown to us. Throughout history, various groups have broken away from the Church, which is a tragic reality that we want to overcome. Whether Christians outside the historic Church in this life are saved is up to God's mercy and grace. And the same is true of those who have that visible participation in the Church.

In this life, to be an Orthodox Christian means belonging to the Orthodox Church. It is not something you can do by yourself or as part of a separate group. Orthodox Christians believe that other Christian or even non-Christian religions may teach some of the truth of the Gospel but that the fullness of the Christian faith is found only in Orthodoxy. That fullness is called Holy Tradition, which is centered on the Scriptures.

So what is Holy Tradition?

Holy Tradition and the Scriptures

Holy Tradition is the deposit of faith given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles and passed on in the Church from one generation to the next without addition, alteration or subtraction. That means nothing gets added, nothing gets changed, and nothing gets removed.

Holy Tradition is transmitted to the Christian from the Apostles of Jesus Christ both by word of mouth and in writing (II Thess. 2:15, 3:6). The Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky famously described Tradition as "the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church." It is dynamic in its application, but unchanging in its doctrine. It is growing in expression, yet always the same in its essential meaning.

Unlike some ideas about tradition, the Orthodox Church does not see Holy Tradition as something that grows and expands over time, forming a collection of practices and doctrines which accumulate, gradually becoming something more developed and eventually unrecognizable to the first Christians. Rather, Holy Tradition is that same faith that Jesus taught to the Apostles and that they gave to their disciples, preserved in the Church and especially in its leadership through Apostolic succession (Jude 1:3).

At the center of Holy Tradition is the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, the written witness to God's revelation in the Church. That means that the Scriptures are always interpreted from within the Tradition that was the context for their writing

and canonization, a process that lasted until the 4th century—it was not until the year 367 that we see the first list of the 27 books we now know as the New Testament.

Alongside Holy Tradition, Orthodox Christians may also speak about other traditions, which are various customs that help us to express the Holy Tradition—these are things like how certain feast days are celebrated, the exact nature of fasting rules, or details of the Church calendar. These things can change over time, and they have. And that's okay. What's important is that the Holy Tradition given by Jesus remains the same.

It is this Holy Tradition that is the basis for our spirituality. So what does spirituality mean for the Orthodox Christian?

Spirituality

The word *spirituality* can be kind of hard to define, so let's say for now that it means "the daily life of the Orthodox Christian." Orthodox Christians seek to pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17), and so for nearly every moment in life, every task, every occasion, there is prayer. It might be a written prayer. It might be a meditative prayer. It might be off the top of our heads. Extemporaneous prayer has a place in the life of the Orthodox Christian, but in general, the Orthodox draw more on the experience of the saints rather than own private opinions, which are less trustworthy.

The spiritual life of an Orthodox Christian is liturgical, sacramental, and mystical. Spiritual intensity is not something reserved for super Christians or monks or nuns. It's for everyone. This life means prayer and frequent participation in liturgical services in church. It's also a whole ascetical way of life, which means fasting and other ascetical disciplines, such as non-possessiveness, so that the whole human person, both soul and body, is brought into communion with Jesus Christ through cooperation with His grace.

We have daily prayer disciplines, liturgical calendars, feast days, times of fasting, and so on. It may seem like a lot of rules at first glance, but it's not about the rules. It's about putting our whole lives into Christ. Some ways of doing that work better.

Holiness is much more than just being moral. It's a whole way of looking at the world and a holistic way of living in it. In Orthodox spirituality, we look for the presence of God in everything and everyone, and we treat them accordingly.

Orthodox spirituality is practical, and it's also customizable with guidance from someone who's experienced—usually our parish priest. And everything moves toward a single goal, the "one thing needful"—life in Jesus Christ, becoming more like Him.

At the very center of all our spirituality is worship. So what is worship?

Worship

For the Orthodox Christian, worship is the highest calling of mankind, to fall down at the feet of the Almighty God, the Holy Trinity, and to give ourselves totally to God, becoming united mystically with Him in the holy mysteries (the "sacraments"). To worship God is to fulfil the purpose for which we were created.

Orthodox worship is liturgical. That means that it follows specific ritual patterns and cycles, with music and prayer and symbolic actions. Liturgical worship is conducted in reverent dignity and embraces the whole of the human person—all five senses! Worship has to be done with reverence and awe, because we are entering into the very throne room of the Creator.

But does *liturgical* mean repetitive and boring? Anything can get boring if done wrongly, but the rich tradition of Orthodox worship is a whole world to explore, one that cannot be exhausted even over a lifetime.

Orthodox worship is transformative, bringing us more deeply into communion with God and through cooperation with God gradually changing us into holy people—saints. The pattern of Orthodox worship is based on the worship in Heaven as seen in the Bible, which includes an altar, incense, chanting, and so on (Is. 6 & 7; Heb. 8:1-6; Rev. 4, 5).

Worship is different from veneration. While worship is about totally giving ourselves to God to be united with Him, veneration is the genuine respect that we show for holy people and things. So while these acts have some things in common—such as bowing in reverence—they're not the same and shouldn't be mixed up.

A secondary but essential part of worship in Orthodoxy is to teach the faith, forming the Christian in the doctrines of the Church, which are not mere rational propositions to be agreed with but are the guide to the Christian life.

The center of Orthodox Christian liturgical life is the Divine Liturgy, the church

service where believers who are prepared by prayer, fasting and confession, receive the Holy Eucharist, bread and wine which have been mystically changed by God into the Body and Blood of Christ (John 6:47-58). Other major church services include Vespers (which is evening prayer) and Matins (morning prayer), which follows in the footsteps of the Apostles, who the Bible says worshiped according to the traditional hours of prayer (Acts 3:1, 10:9, 10:30).

We mentioned sacraments as part of Orthodox worship. What are they?

Sacraments

In a sense, the Church's whole life is sacrament. The more traditional term for the sacraments in the Orthodox Church is the *holy mysteries*. In the mysteries, the Christian is united with God, becoming a partaker of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). With all the sacraments, God is present for us in His divine energies, using physical means to convey Himself to his people.

The word *mystery* means both something beyond our understanding but also the mystical, which is that which unites the divine with the human. Historically, the word *mystery* refers not so much to a "thing" as to an "action," God acting upon us.

There are seven generally recognized sacraments, though we've never made that number official. Two are sacraments of initiation into the Church, **baptism** (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12; I Peter 3:21) and **chrismation** (also called confirmation; Acts 8:14-17, 19:6). Another one completes the initiation and then nourishes the whole life of the Christian, the Eucharist, which is regarded as the highest of the sacraments (John 6:47-58; Luke 24:35; Acts 2:42, 46).

The remainder of the sacraments are occasional: **holy unction** for the sick, an anointing with holy oil (James 5:14); **confession** for repentance and reconciliation with the Church (I John 1:9; James 5:16); **marriage** for joining one man with one woman for life (John 2, etc.), and **ordination** for those called to serve the Church in holy orders (Acts 6:1-6, 13:3; Titus 1:5; I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6).

All of the mysteries require preparation in the Church's life, and so are not administered to the non-Orthodox (Matt. 7:6). The one exception is baptism, the mystery that unites the Christian with Christ in the Church, bringing him from being a believer in Christ as someone preparing for baptism to being a full member of the Body of Christ. And depending on how it was done and what was believed at

the time, those who have received baptism in a non-Orthodox setting may receive chrismation so that they become Orthodox.

So we mentioned ordination. Who are the clergy of the Orthodox Church? What do they do?

Clergy

The clergy of the Orthodox Church have been called by God to fulfill specific functions of service and leadership in the Church (Acts 6:1-6, 13:3; Titus 1:5; I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6). They are not worthy in themselves to serve in these ways, but by the grace of ordination, God enables them to carry out His will. This is why after an ordination is complete, the people shout the word *Axios!* (which means "Worthy!"), not because the Church is saying that he is worthy to be ordained (since he has already been ordained by that point in the service), but rather because the Holy Spirit has descended upon him and given him this ministry.

Clergy are not inherently higher or better than the laity in the Church, who are also ordained to a specific ministry as the royal priesthood of Christ. The ministry of the clergy is a more intense and potentially spiritually dangerous role, since its business is the ministry of the holy mysteries and the responsibility of the teaching of the people of God. God will hold clergy accountable for the responsibility He gave them.

There are two basic categories of clergy in the Church—minor orders and major orders. The minor orders currently in use in the Church are reader, cantor (chanter) and subdeacon. The major orders which are from apostolic times and remain permanent within the Church are deacon, presbyter (priest/elder) and bishop. The bishops are all sacramentally equal, working together in council to work through tough questions for the Church. Though certain bishops have more seniority and more responsibility than others, there is no Orthodox equivalent to the Roman Catholic pope, either administratively or doctrinally.

Saints

The word *saints* can mean two different things. First, the saints are all those who are in the Body of Christ, the Church (Acts 9, etc.). The word saint means one who has been set apart for God's purposes, which is what it means to be holy. To be holy is to be set apart.

In the second, more common, sense, the *saints* are those whose lives have clearly shown that they are indeed set apart for the service of God. Their holiness, which is not their own but is from Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20), is so obvious that Orthodox Christians give them great respect, which is called *veneration*. We venerate them because of Christ's work in them.

When the Church officially recognizes the work of Christ in one the saints, it does the formal work of canonization (which we also call "glorification"). God's people affirm them as saved, and their lives can be imitated, just as the Apostle Paul urged us to imitate him as he imitated Christ (I Cor. 11:1). As part of canonization, liturgical services are composed for the celebration of the feast days of the saints, and their place as participants in the common worship of the whole Church is confirmed with iconography, visual images that connect us with a spiritual reality. The saints always surround us as a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1).

The Orthodox Church has many saints that have emerged throughout our history. And history itself is important to us.

History

The Church's history records the progress of Christ's work throughout the course of the human experience. History in Orthodoxy has a theological importance because of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Just as God chose to become a physical, living, breathing human man, He also chooses to work in and through human history to bring about salvation for us. While the Biblical history is most sacred in that it is the salvation story, the Gospel, the rest of the Church's history is also sacred, because it is a witness to the continued effects of the salvation story in the experience of mankind.

History is also a record of the Church's experience through time, applying the one, unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ across the centuries, across continents and across very diverse cultures. It is because of this experience over the centuries that we turn to the guidance of the saints for practical direction on living the spiritual life and for help in understanding the Scriptures and all the teachings of the Church. Some of the saints are called Church Fathers, whose word is trusted on how the Bible should be interpreted, how worship should be done, and how to repent of our sins and grow in holiness. It is because of their personal experience and knowledge of God as recognized by the Church that they are trustworthy guides.

Conclusion

In our diverse and pluralistic culture, the Orthodox Church can sometimes seem like a vast liturgical dinosaur, something that has frozen in time, that represents an obsolete era or a dead ritualism. Yet the experience of the faithful Orthodox Christian is that his faith is very much alive, dynamic, relevant and applicable at every moment. This is no dead ritualism, but a living tradition. This faith is also trustworthy, just as Christ Himself is—the same yesterday, today and forever.

Orthodox Christianity is also not a “niche” religion, suitable only for a certain ethnicity, temperament, age, or social status. Orthodoxy is a timeless, universal and saving way of life. Orthodox Christianity is a dynamic, divine program for the healing of the soul, given by God and bringing mankind and all the cosmos into harmony and communion with the Holy Trinity in Jesus Christ.

We can’t summarize the entire life of the twenty centuries of the Orthodox Church’s presence on Earth in a short presentation. It’s hard even to summarize what it means for one person to live as an Orthodox Christian. Nevertheless, through this brief series, we hope that you have been introduced to what it means to be Orthodox.

You are invited to come and experience our worship with us, which is the heart of our life and our common journey to knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, with His Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Appendix

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages;

Light of light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father, through whom all things were made;

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from the heavens and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered and was buried.

And he arose on the third day according to the Scriptures.

And he ascended into the heavens and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

And he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake through the prophets.

In One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, formulated at the First and Second Ecumenical Councils (held in Nicea and Constantinople in AD 325 and 381, respectively) is the primary statement of faith of the Orthodox Christian Church, and thus, in its original form, is worded "We believe…" rather than "I believe…" It was formulated in response to heresy and has been understood since its articulation in the 4th century as an expression of the timeless, unchanging faith given by Christ to the Apostles. It is often known simply as The Nicene Creed.

Credits

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